

The Poet Burns.

We had in our possession the identical pair of Bibles presented by the immortal Burns to the dearest object of his affection, Highland Mary, on the banks of the winding Ayer, when he spent with her 'one day of parting love.'—They are in remarkable good preservation, and belong to a descendant of the family of Mary's Mother, Mrs. Campbell, whose property they became on the death of her daughter—and subsequently Mrs. Anderson, Mary's only surviving sister, acquired them. The circumstances of the Bibles being in two volumes, seemed at one time to threaten its dismemberment—Mrs. Anderson having presented a volume to each of her two daughters—but, on their approaching marriage their brother William prevailed on them to dispose of the sacred volumes to him. On the first blank leaf of the sacred volume is written in the hand-writing of the immortal bard: 'And ye shall not swear by my name falsely—I am the Lord—Levit. 12th chap. 12th verse.'—On the second blank leaf of each volume there are the remains of Robert Burns' Masonic emblem, in his hand-writing beneath which is drawn a Masonic emblem. At the end of the first volume, there is a lock of Highland Mary's hair.

There is a mournful interest attached to these sacred volumes—sacred from their contents, and sacred from having been a pledge of love from the most gifted of Scotland's Bards to the artless object of his affections, from whom he was separating, no more to meet on this side of the grave. The life of Burns was full of romance, but there is not one circumstance in it, all so romantic and full of interest, as those which attended and followed the gift of these volumes. He was young when he wrote and won the affections of Mary, whom he describes as 'a warm hearted, charming young creature, as ever blessed a man with generous love.' The attachment was mutual, and formed the subject of many of his earliest lyrics, as well as of the productions of his later years, which shows that it was deep-rooted.—Before he was known to fame, steeped in poverty to the very dregs, and meditating an escape to the West Indies, from the remorseless fangs of a hard-hearted creditor, he addressed to his dear girl, the song which begins:

'Will you go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave scot's shore?

'Will you go to the Indies, my Mary,
And cross the Atlantic's roar?

But neither Burns nor his Mary were destined to 'cross the Atlantic's roar,' nor to realize those dreams of natural bliss which passion or enthusiasm had engendered in their youthful imaginations. Burns was called to Edinburgh, there to commence his career of fame, which was to terminate in civil poverty, dreary disappointment, and despair—while Mary's happy lot, after a transient gleam of the sunshine of life, and a spirit of subdued grief and tenderness was displayed whenever she was the subject of his conversations or writings. Witness as follows:

'Ye banks an' braes an' streams around,
The castle of Montgomerie,
Green be your woods an' fair your flowers,
Your water never drumb.
These simmer first unfeels her robes,
An' then they longest tarry,
For these I took my last farewell
O' sweet Highland Mary!

In a note appended to this song Burns says:—

'This was a composition of mine in my early life, before I was known at all to the world. My Highland lassie was a warm-hearted, charming young creature, as ever blessed a man with generous love. After a pretty long trial of the most ardent reciprocal attachment, we met by appointment on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot on the banks of the Ayer, where we spent a day in taking a farewell before she would embark for the West Highlands, in strange matters among our friends for our projected change of life. At the close of the autumn following, she was to meet me at Greenock, where she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to the grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness.'

It was at this romantic and interesting meeting on the banks of the Ayer, that the above mentioned Bibles were presented to Mary, and he must have a heart of stone, indeed, who can gaze on them without his imagination calling up feelings in his heart too big for utterance. On that spot they exchanged Bibles and plighted their faith to each other, the stream dividing them, and the sacred book 'grasped by both over its purpling waters.' This was the token of affection each bore to the other, and the wealth of the Indies, had not procured a better or more appropriate one.

In Lockhart's life of Burns we are informed that several years after the death of Mary, on the anniversary of the day which brought him the melancholy intelligence, he appeared as twilight advanced (in the language of his widow,) 'very say about something,' and, though the evening was a cold and keen one in September, he wandered into his barn-yard, from which the exertions of his wife could not for some time recall him.

To these entreaties he always promised obedience, but these promises were but the lip-kindness of affection, no sooner made than forgotten, for his eye was fixed on heaven, and hisressing strides also indicated that his heart was also there. Mrs. Burns' last appearance at the barn-yard found him stretched on a mass of straw, looking abstractly on a planet, which, in a clear starry sky, 'shone like another moon,' and having prevailed on him to return to the house, he instantly wrote, as they stand, the following subjoined verses: 'To Mary in Heaven,' which have thrilled through many hearts and drawn tears.

'How many eyes—how which will live
the residue of the lyrics of Burns, while
sublimity and pathos have a responding charm in the hearts of Seconians.'

To Mary in Heaven.

Then lingering star, with lenzing ray,
That lovest to greet the early morn,
Against us unfeast, in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.

O, Mary, thou departed shade!
Where is thy place of blessed rest?
Send thou thy lover hither laid?

He's lost the grace that rend his brest.

Just eschew me, and which will live
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